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YOUTH and RECREATION, Ontario Department of Education

"drop-in...A PLACE TO GO...SOMEBODY TO TALK TO"



There is always someone there to talk to. I'm with people and it's fun.



Sometimes it's boring. Sometimes it's enjoyable. But it's a place to go.



Well, the drop-in is a place to meet other people, girls. It's something to do.



It's something to do. I like listening to groups of musicians. Also it's a place to go with your problems.



I like people. That's why I go. You can talk to other kids and to the staff. The games are okay too.



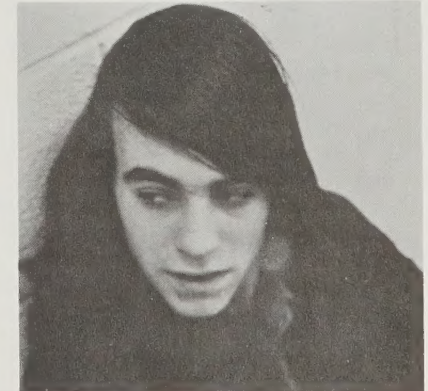
Everybody's willing to listen to you. It's a great place. My friends are there



School is strict, static and tense. The drop-in is a release and there are no rules. I want to help make things more comfortable and free.



It's a place to meet other kids with the same ideas and problems. There's music and you don't need money at the centre.



I wish it was open 24 hours. You can work out your problems, meet people and see friends. I like ping pong.

A HARD LESSON

by Neil Murray

South Amazon Park in Eugene, Oregon, isn't really much of a park. A little grass, a few trees, some children's toys. All nestled cozily within a strictly middle-class neighborhood. But two years ago, the park became the focal point of a minor local controversy. Nearby residents wrote letters to the editor of the city's only daily newspaper complaining about "hippies" in the park who were smoking marijuana, making illicit love, bullying smaller children, etc.etc.

From that point the battle worked itself up to full pitch. The "hippies", who turned out to be about 20 long-haired teenagers from the neighborhood, complained that actually they were the ones being "hassled" — by both residents and police. They really weren't looking for trouble, only a place to go.

The police grew weary responding to countless complaints from park neighbors; arriving at the scene of an alleged crime to find no evidence of crime or even in many cases anyone who might have committed a crime. There were a couple of church-sponsored community meetings. It even looked for a while as though someone might do something. But then school started, the fall rains came, interest dwindled.

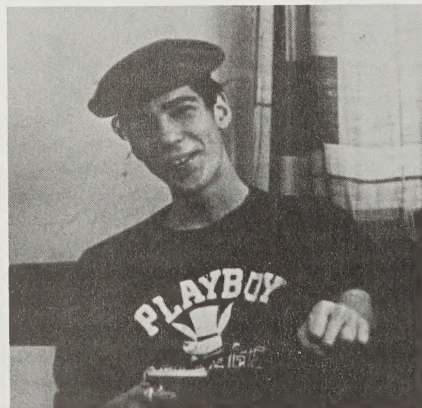
The following spring I discussed the South Amazon situation with a couple of University of Oregon students. We thought "a place to go" seemed a reasonable enough request. So we began to plan. Eventually our ideas materialized as a drop-in center located on the periphery of the park in a very small church-owned building. Due largely to the persuasions of a progressive minister, the church lowered its resistance to the idea to a sort of "look-the-other-way" tolerance. We would staff the center with seven university students and maintain a broad schedule.

Nearly all youth is alienated

Our ideas were simple and straightforward. The teenagers or "hippies"

(pick your own term, it's a difficult chore) were obviously alienated. Obviously, because nearly every one who's young is. And that was why they were using drugs. We were smart enough to realize that we didn't know how to get them off drugs, so we never had any aspirations of doing that.

Instead, we structured our center around a few assumptions regarding alienation. We had done some reading and knew that our assumptions enjoyed rather widespread popularity in the literature of youth alienation. These assumptions were: (1) contemporary mass society is such that personalized experiences which make kids "feel" important, as though they matter, are hard to come by — and this is, in fact, the root of alienation; (2) through participation and involvement in constructive activities of their own initiation, kids can find the sense of efficacy which they need to combat alienation; (3) activities and rules, to be meaningful, have to be initiated by the youth themselves — staff can serve only as supportive resource people; and, (4) the staff, to establish necessary rapport, must be somewhat similar to the youth in life-style, that is, they too should be "hip". (I appreciate the difficulties involved in using such ambiguous youth culture jargon, but that's as close to a definition as we ever got. My own impression was that being "hip" had to do with being as far away from authoritarianism as possible and as close to the drug scene as tolerable.) In short, the drop-in center is a staffed, con-



"Drop-in a place to go... somebody to talk to."

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temporary version of the traditional clubhouse.

No drugs or alcohol

Involving a handful of the neighborhood youth, we selected a staff of seven university students and the South Amazon Drop-In Center became a reality in June 1969. There was only one rule: no drugs or alcohol.

If numbers measure success, the center was an immediate smash. Within days, it had 50 or so regular users and many others who came less frequently. And as time progressed, there were several youth-initiated activities: a couple of outdoor trips, a flea-market, a short-lived coffee-house venture, minor dabbling in arts and crafts, community feasts, and meetings, and meetings, and meetings. But mostly the kids liked to sit around and "rap".

At one community meeting, a well-intentioned man, looking very much like a successful realtor, opined that, as far as he was concerned, the center was fine, but did they have to sit right in front of the building where all the passers-by could see? The kids bellowed loudly and finally answered, yes, they did have to because the front of the building was the only place where there were any trees to shade them while they rapped.

At the end of the summer, the center seemed a success. There was an absence of the controversy that had marked the preceding summer. There had been activities. The community meetings were successful in generating a core of adult support. Interestingly, the initial meetings were dominated by hostile adult expressions but, as they continued, the hostility subsided and support, although limited to a relatively small group, intensified. And, finally, the place hadn't been busted.

School began, the building was returned to the church. The staff, the kids, and supportive adults began a frenzied search for a better building for next summer, and money. The latter, apparently, being based on an upper-middle-class assumption that money ought to be sought whether or not there is any demonstrated need for it — which there was not.

If a goal of the center was to create

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A HARD LESSON

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a sense of effectiveness, the fall, winter, and spring months of 1969-70 were definitely counter-productive. Proposal after proposal was drafted, meeting after meeting conducted, negotiations were started and dropped and started over again. One city official confided to the kids that they'd never get any money until they could show support from where it counted, the allusive power structure. Summer came again. Results: zero.

But all was not lost. The church was again prepared to offer its building, still hesitantly, but less so than before. At the same time, I worked with some other university students in negotiating for a Parks Department-owned building in another part of the city, Skinner's Butte, which could be generally termed a lower-middle-class neighborhood.

Summer 1970 would bring two drop-in centers, although the Parks Department proved to be far more cautious and formidable negotiators than had been the church.

Selection of staff was accomplished by committees which included extensive teen-age and community adult membership.

Knowing what the South Amazon kids were like, we channeled the hipper staff applicants to that center. Straighter applicants were sent to Skinner's Butte since we didn't know what to expect there but had hunches that drugs were not as crucial a part of the environment.

The staffs, then, are not exact equivalents. The South Amazon people are hipper, farther into the drug scene, more deeply committed to youth initiation. The Skinner's Butte staff, is more heterogeneous, less committed to youth-initiation, slightly less worldly regarding drugs, and somewhat more directive.

And there are other differences. Physically, the Skinner's Butte facility is far superior to the one at South Amazon. It's a ramshackle, old two-bedroom house with an expansive, wooded yard and no immediately adjacent residential neighbors — ideal. Additionally, the attitudes of the respective neigh-

borhoods regarding the centers are quite different. At South Amazon it seems as though everyone cares strongly — one way or the other. But at Skinner's Butte a door-to-door survey prior to the opening of the center revealed mostly apathy, especially among the area's many elderly citizens.

In early July, both centers opened. Again, numbers came easily. Although, the lower-middle-class youth of the Skinner's Butte area were a bit more cautious than their more affluent, cross-city counterparts. Soon both centers were dealing with large numbers of teen-agers.

A bitter, frustrating experience

But this summer we learned that success cannot be measured by numbers. The South Amazon Drop-In Center became a bitter, frustrating experience. There were far fewer activities, youth-initiated, or otherwise. The kids seemed unconcerned about the future of the center, more willing to take the risk that it be busted; wine and drugs were commonplace. The staff was repeatedly placed in deliberate jeopardy by the kids. All this in spite of the fact that there was much broader community support and the staff was not substantively or stylistically different from last summer's.

While the Skinner's Butte Drop-In Center seemed to function more smoothly, there were growing symptoms as the summer waned that the same deteriorating process had begun. There was more dope around the center, flagrantly and openly abused. Crimes of a growing degree of seriousness were committed. Where there was once great concern for the center and aggressive antagonism towards anyone who threatened it, there was now ambivalence.

It seems as though we have not succeeded, although the basic pragmatism of the Skinner's Butte staff ("we do it if it feels good") does leave some room for hope.

What is there to be learned from all this? It's hard to say. Much remains uncertain, but I have begun to grapple with a few, highly tenuous notions.

First, the drug culture can become so highly pervasive as to effectively thwart

all else. In 1969 we were dealing with seekers, but in 1970, at least at South Amazon, we are dealing with heads.

When the heads rap, they rap about drugs

When the heads rap, they rap about drugs. When they get involved in something else — as they rarely do — they bring their drugs with them; openly or covertly whichever is necessary. They don't care if they get busted. For some, it would mean status. The mood is so intense and thorough that it is nearly impossible to penetrate.

Second, that old bugaboo, adolescent peer group pressure, has a suffocating quality. The longer the centers exist, the more prevalent, closed and ingroupish attitudes become. For instance, at Skinner's Butte the youth population was initially mixed — some hip, some straight. Now there are only the hip. Strangers who enter the centers are not really met with hostility, just indifference; an even more brutal and dehumanizing nonreception. Aberrant behavior patterns move quickly through the entire group. Even staff members who are very similar in attitude have a trying time coping with this group phenomenon.

Centers symbolize permissive attitudes found at home

Third, and most important, there is the question of our ideological approach. The centers, with all their emphasis upon youth-initiation, non-direction, and anti-authoritarianism cannot, in the final analysis, be seen as ways to effectively relate to youth alienation. In fact, they are the very symbol of exactly the set of conditions which most young people have encountered most of their lives. The kids can do what they want, the staff members (read, parents) will only help, will only provide resources, will not get in the way, will be friendly, will certainly not assert themselves or insist upon their own identity.

This is what we've come to call permissiveness. It is generally recognized as standard practice in upper-middle-class homes. But one gets the distinct impression that the final word is not yet in on this

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drop-in CENTRE

A NEW PHENOMENON?

John Flynn, co-ordinator, youth section
Youth and Recreation Branch

Why do drop-in centres exist? They exist because young people want them to exist. They do not meet a new need, they simply serve as a new way of meeting a very old need.

Young people have always had a need for peer acceptance. They have always had a need for each other. A drop-in centre is one way to meet those needs.

Young people, like all humans, always have their own personal problems to resolve. The problems of self-identity, self-acceptance, of maturing physically, psychologically and socially, of being accepted and loved, are amongst the major concerns. In earlier times, communities were smaller and closely knit; extended families included several generations. It was possible for young people to have a feeling of belonging and to talk out solutions to personal problems within their extended family situation.

Drop-in centres vary in the age groups they serve, in the socio-economic background of the young people who attend, and in their programs. Some centres are introverted, serving only the needs of those who show up. Others are extroverted and reach out trying to develop a community consciousness. One of the common characteristics is that they reflect the psychology and characteristics of the local youth community they serve.

Today's society has separated the family and outgrown the small community. Drop-in centres are an attempt by young people to fill the vacuum changing society has created.

Ask the young people who attend

drop-in centres. They will tell you it is a place where they can talk to each other and to the staff about things that bother them. Often just airing a problem helps put it into focus. Resolution can follow quickly.

The adults who staff the centres are often called upon to listen and advise. Many times, these people, whether professional or not, render

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TWO-LEVEL drop-in CENTRES WORK IN BOWMANVILLE

Starting last July, Bowmanville's Department of Recreation funded and conducted two drop-in centres, one for boys and girls from 11 to 15 and a separate one for those from 16 to 20.

The junior centre, under the direction of high school student Gary Baker, operated in the lounge of the Memorial Arena. Facilities for

table tennis, art work, chess and checkers were provided. Activities were decided by the users. Music was piped in. The centre was open from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. and 7 to 10 p.m.

The centre was closed at the end of August after a successful season, and is expected to open again next summer.

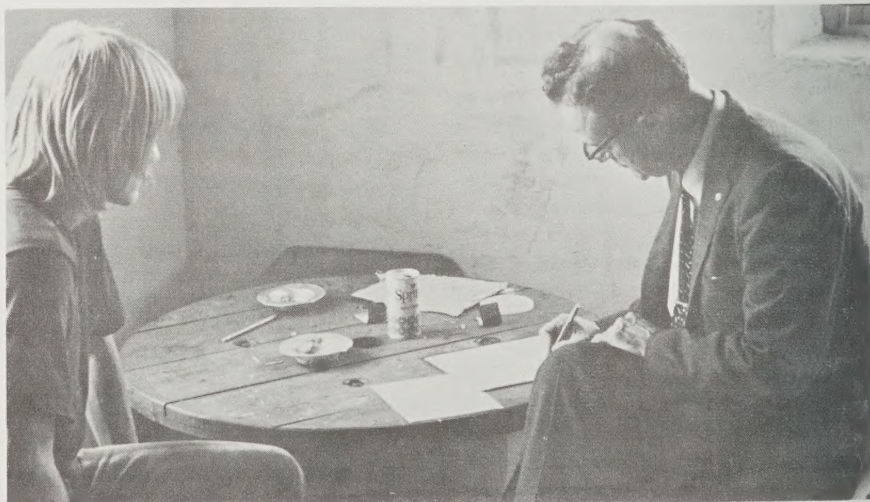
The senior drop-in centre location was in the Cream of Barley Mill House. The Rotary Club of Bowmanville paid for re-wiring, installation of outside lights, and cementing the basement floor.

The teens committee, 15 teenagers under the direction of 19-year-old supervisor Bill Wright, painted the walls and floors of the main floor and the basement, cleaned up the bush area around the building, and did the policing.

Citizens turned out to help. Rev. Father Heffernan and Cecil Mutton were two enthusiasts who did manual labor side by side with the young people readying the quarters.

Bowmanville's youth showed how capable they could be when they had a project that was "theirs". Many, including Mark Rowe, Mike Gibson, two of the organizers, and John Milne showed leadership qualities.

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Generation gap gets narrower every day in Bowmanville because youth and adults can and do communicate. Here in the Mill House drop-in, Bill Wright, left, supervisor and George Vice, postmaster and Rotary Club representative, talk over jobs that need doing.

How it is in oshawa

The most effective way to relate to young people is within the physical environment of a non-judgmental, non-directive, unstructured setting. Sensitive, mature, concerned adults with skills in relating to youth and youth concerns are the major tools through which we can attempt to have a positive impact on these youth. Relationship is the key. The successful formula for effecting change in these youth, of enhancing the social functioning and meeting emotional needs is then through a supportive relationship of adult with youth within the context of the non-threatening, accepting environment.

It follows, therefore, that "program" within the drop-in must become a means to an end and not an end in itself. The program in the drop-in must be a tool through which relationship can be established and the emotional and social needs of the young person can be met.

Excerpt from a brief to
Oshawa Parks, Property
and Recreation Committee

Four years ago in Oshawa, a group of adults and teenagers directed by Rev. Mr. Tom Gemmell, Father Paul Woodcroft and Grant Southwell, Oshawa Recreation Department, formed a Youth Co-ordinating Committee to study the problem of detached and alienated youth.

From this group, developed a new group, Youth Task Force.

One of Youth Task Force's priorities was to convince the City of Oshawa of the need to employ a trained youth worker. At this time, Father Brooks who worked with young people, came to Task Force and asked their help in establishing a drop-in.

Drop-in born

Task Force became involved in Father Brooks' project and in March

1970 presented a proposal to City Council for the Oshawa Downtown Youth Drop-in Centre. This proposal was accepted. The City provided space in the city owned old Legion Hall. Space was renovated and would be maintained by the Parks and Property Department. Leaders would be supplied by the Recreation Department but Youth would run the programs. From March to June the centre was manned by volunteers.

Churches co-operate

A trained worker was needed. And in June, an association of 10 churches, the YWCA and a group of interested citizens known as Project Youth, chaired by Father Camil Dufor, guaranteed funds for the payment of a professional.

The original space in the Legion Hall was soon outgrown. Tom Gemmell presented a brief to City Council requesting additional space and a second full time professional worker. Only the space was provided.

Problems

Some young people felt that they were harassed by the police when they stood around outside the centre. They felt the police would not notice them if, for instance they stood

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YAC

The back of the business card reads:

- . Counselling and friendship in a relaxed easy atmosphere
- . Help offered re accommodation, employment and medical aid.

That sums up the Youth Aid Centre ... YAC to Richmond Hill young people.

YAC, now a community service, developed from a small operation personally funded by three Seneca College students, Barbara Fawns, John Raynor and Jim Docherty. It began when a boy with a drug and a home problem came to the students house for help. He got it. He told his friends and soon other young people with problems were dropping into the small house on Markham Road. By January 1970 the students realized that if they were to continue helping distressed youth, they would need funds and a location.

They learned the Addiction Research Foundation would provide funds if they could produce evidence of community support for the project. Thirty-five Richmond Hill citizens

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Used for meetings, film showings and craft work, Street Community Centre is also a distribution point for a food co-op. Fruits and vegetables are bought wholesale and sold at cost to 200 to 250 young people living in 30 co-op houses. Because of the no-heat situation, everyone works in outdoor clothes.

(Story on page 9)



The young people who live in Richmond Hill's Youth Aid Centre do their own housekeeping and snow removal chores, just as they would at their own homes if they had not rejected that way of life.

YAC

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were asked to assist; a steering committee was formed and a brief was presented to town council. Council granted funds for a three-month pilot project. Community support secured, ARF too made a grant.

A house slated for demolition was made available. Service clubs and citizens re-wired and re-glazed so that the house was habitable. By the end of August the project was completed and funds were exhausted. While the centre had started as a three-month project, it was obvious there was need to continue it. There was much support. Donald Deacon, MP for York Centre, favored it. Citizens donated money. The staff went on half salary and the centre survived another month.

Then an additional problem developed. The house they had been using was about to be torn down. A new location was not available so the young people moved into the students' house on Markham Road. Funds were now provided on a regular basis — 75% from the Department of Public Health and 25% from York County. Financing assured, there are still

obstacles. YAC's current house is also marked for demolition. Small as this white clapboard is, jumbled as it is with mis-matched donated furniture, it is the first bearable home atmosphere many of the youngsters have found.

If there is one characteristic the kids have in common, it is the feeling of being unworthy and unloved. They feel adults neither understand nor love them and they have trouble relating to people outside their own generation.

YAC tries to develop two-way understanding and respect. They operate on three shifts of eight hours each. Staff people are always in attendance. Most of the troubled youngsters are boys between 18 and 20. They may stay as long as there is a need. Some go to school. Others work. Some are job hunting. Most are sensitive. Some show talent in music or art. Unframed works decorate the walls and the garage thunders with the sound of rock.

Each week there is a general meeting to discuss plans for the coming week. Residents do their own housekeeping and get their own breakfast and supper. In free time, the young people do what they would be doing

at their own homes if they had not rejected them—homework, hobbies, rapping and rock.

Because the young people have such a great need for reassurance, acceptance and a feeling of worth, the professional staff tries to create a positive, friendly home and family atmosphere where these qualities can be nurtured and strengthened.

Because the community co-operates, YAC has excellent resources, a complete network of assistance. There is a back-up of 11 doctors including two psychiatrists on call and willing to help.

An encouraging aspect is that the young people are proud of their new "home", are finding solutions to their problems and some are able to return to "our" world.

A point of interest: the first boy who came to the three Seneca students for help and by so doing started the chain reaction that led to the formation of YAC, now operates a drop-in centre himself and is trying to help other youth as he himself was helped.



John Raynor, with fellow Seneca students Barbara Fawns and Jim Docherty, (now co-directors of YAC) began the Richmond Hill operation, relaxes in YAC's office. A phone call from here to any of the back-up doctors, psychiatrists and resource people brings quick help to the troubled young people to whom YAC is home.

SITUATION IN KINGSTON

Aimless kids collecting in apathetic bunches and hanging about without motive, purpose or direction worried David Poole, program director of the YMCA in Kingston. He talked to other concerned citizens and out of these discussions came a proposal to the YM-YWCA to provide facilities for a drop-in centre for the use of young people in the 14 to 20 years age bracket.

The proposal was approved by the full board of the YM-YWCA. At the approval meeting, the board was made aware of the problems and the criticisms that could follow.

Two rooms and a lounge were provided. Hours were to be 1 to 10:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday 1 p.m. to midnight Friday and 3 p.m. to midnight Saturday. The lounge and one room were to be decorated the way the young people wanted. A creative program was to be undertaken.

An information and referral service would be set up to deal with medical, psychological, drug and alcohol problems. Two part-time staffs would be used, one to assist in the operation of a children's program and one to run the youth desk during peak periods. A fund to support the programs and outings was arranged.

Important policy decisions were made. These included an "understanding" about the use of drugs and alcohol. Neither were permitted on the premises, but a young person under the influence should not necessarily be turned away.

In cooperation with school authorities, an attempt would be made to determine why many students were skipping classes or dropping out. If students came to the drop-in when they should have been in school, they would not

necessarily be refused admission.

The children's program would not be developed at the expense of the youth program.

There should be a willingness to accept "fringe" behavior and possible criticism and to recognize that the drop-in might affect other Y programs and the residence itself.

The drop-in centre would run for a year, with evaluations at the end of the first six months and at the end of the year.

Action

Various courses of action that might prove beneficial to youth were considered. These included working with Queens University in the establishment of psychological testing procedures; with St. Lawrence College in establishing a career counselling procedure; with medical and hospital staffs for treatment of young people with drug problems with parole and probation officers. In addition, outings, lectures and discussion groups were discussed.

Permissiveness

In August 1970, the drop-in centre opened. David Poole was program director and James Clark assistant program director. They began to develop volunteers from Queens University and McArthur College. At first the centre was operated on a permissive basis. The only rule enforced concerned use of alcohol or drugs on the premises. Breaking this rule meant permanent eviction. The staff believed initial permissiveness was necessary to develop trust and rapport with the teenagers.

Some of the teenagers used drugs and alcohol and then came to the drop-in centre. Under these circumstances, they were not asked to leave. Rather they were encouraged to stay because it was felt it was better to keep them in a safe environment than have them roaming the streets. To cover emergencies that might arise, resource people were on call 24 hours.

About two months later, the staff decided to create an advisory board which would meet informally and help with decisions. The board was to consist of two psychiatrists, a secondary school teacher, a lawyer and other interested citizens.

Trust

The young people came to trust the staff. They began to discuss their personal problems and seek counsel. It was obvious that many were drinking and using the centre as a haven or sanctuary. The staff, having established an understanding, thought it was time to have a few rules. A minimum fee was charged for membership. Then began a clamping down on the use of alcohol and drugs. Staff were able to solve this problem by communication with both youth and parents.

Because the staff had the trust of the young people, they were able to influence them. Many stopped taking drugs and using alcohol. Because the young people felt they now had a place of their own and a responsibility, there were fewer acts of violence and run-ins with the police.

The staff believed they were making gains and that the centre was proving itself.

Fatal visit

One Saturday evening, several members of the board made their first visit. They observed some young people "engaged in heavy necking" and some they thought might be high on drugs or alcohol. The board decided this was against the philosophy of the YM-YWCA and that more rules should be set up in keeping with their principles.

The new rules went into effect November 24. The lounge and the room decorated to drop-in tastes were restored to normal. Brighter lights were installed. No alcohol or drugs were to be used on the premises, and no one under the influence of either to be admitted. An exception would be made if the

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NOTES ON A YOUTH CENTRE

Bob Forrester

Director, North Toronto Youth Centre

All youth centres are based on one of three models. The first is an extension of the already established institutions, family, school, church and so on. Model two is a counter institution based on self-determination. Model three is some liberal pattern between the first and second.

The older youth centres tend to be model one and the most recent centres seem to be model three. I know of no successful model two centre that has accumulated enough strength to withstand the pressures, economic primarily, but also legal, social and psychological.

I speak in theory but I am committed to striving towards a model two that would be based on community support and be able to give the members the right to make important decisions on any matters that affect them.

Powerlessness

To be realistic, youth under 16 are without power of any kind. Legally they can't leave home. Usually they have little or no influence on family life decisions. They are compelled to remain in school, within a structure that allows them only token choices in who teaches them, what they are taught and who administers them. Youth over 16 are restricted economically and sometimes socially if they abandon the family and school.

Young people need a place to release tension, recuperate and to learn to "put it together". Relief is also achieved when they learn their anxieties are "normal" and they can establish companionships and friendships for support.

In their centres youth should be given the power to decide who the staff should be, or at least who they shouldn't be — what they want to happen in the centre — how they want to spend the money available —

what rules are to govern the centre — in short, as much self-determination as possible.

Youth centres and drop-ins

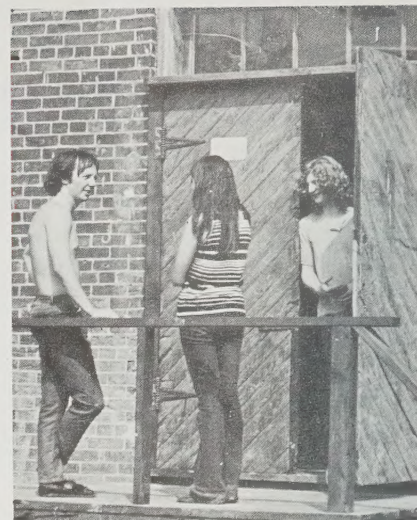
If a centre is to appeal to a large cross-section of youth, the environment must be varied and dynamic. As moods change they must feel comfortable in the space created for them, or have opportunities to find or create a space compatible with where their heads are at. If only one or two environments are available, the kids who relate well to those particular environments will come again and again. It is perhaps for this reason that drop-ins tend to collect a small, repeating crowd.

Many youth centres are hard put to define their purpose and consequently do not develop plans. There is little if any good literature to explain the development of these centres. The only knowledge comes from on-the-job experience. In a period of poor support, the staff will become frustrated, little programming will develop and the centre may drift towards the typical drop-in pattern.

Paradox I

A centre that has sensitive and responsible staff who are open to initiate programs on the suggestions of the young people, will present a non-threatening, non-authoritarian environment. The youth to whom this environment is most appealing are problem kids who come asking for help, kids who won't ask directly for help, kids who push dope on the confused kids. Thus the staff's time gets more and more taken up with talking about personal problems or patrolling for dope use. Programming gets less and less attention and the centre becomes less exciting, less interesting until a drop-in stage is reached.

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Many of the young people who frequented the Mill House became volunteer workers as did John Milne left, and Lyn Lorimer, centre. Young man at right is a visitor from England. (Story on page 4)

drop-in centre a new phenomenon?

cont'd from page 4

a great service to young people. Often too, they refer youth to specialized professional help.

Young people need to assert themselves and to achieve a degree of independence. The milieu of the drop-in centre creates opportunities for this self-expression. The most successful centres, in my experience, are those which derive most of the energy and direction from the young people themselves. This does not mean that adults are not needed. They are. Only those centres that have the backing of the adult - community, both materially and psychologically, have any chance to succeed.

In essence, drop-in centres are not a new phenomenon. They are merely a reflection of man's ability to adjust to the pressures of society and to discover a way to survive.

In my opinion, they will continue to exist as long as young people want them. My hope is that a maturity on the part of both young and old will continue to exert itself so that our young people will not be frustrated in their attempts "to be".

A HARD LESSON

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style of upbringing. For one important reason; although we have defined it and studied it as though it represented a well-thought-out, conscious parental strategy — something carefully derived and finally determined to be the best plan — but, nothing could be farther from the truth. What we have in most families, upper-middle-class and otherwise (excepting perhaps those which have maintained strong ethno-religious values — which probably lead to other problems), is not so much a strategy as a nonstrategy. There is no plan, only confusion. Parents, sensing dimly if not recognizing fully, the near-total erosion of old values and yet still at a loss to identify any new ones, have retreated from the parental arena. But only part way. There are still sporadic, over-the-shoulder attempts at value instruction. The inevitable result is a headless diffusion of values which the bewildered child can only see as meaningless chaos. To confront parental values directly, which would be useful in identity-building terms, is nearly impossible.

Examine, for instance, the story of a 12-year old Skinner's Butte boy. His mother has told him of the dangers of smoking and has indicated not her disapproval, but her lack of approval. But, as long as the boy wants to smoke, which he does, she will buy him cigarettes. Is this a plan? It's so contradictory and loaded with opposite signals as to be stupefying. If she thinks smoking is dangerous and undesirable why doesn't she act that way? Is she being permissive by letting the boy smoke, or is she being manipulative by insisting that he come to her for his cigarettes? Both. Neither.

Parents and center staff share value-confusion

The centers emerge, then, not as a new approach to youth alienation, but as mere extension of a valueless or value-confused childhood. The staff end up facing the same problems as the parents: unconcern, willful disobedience, alienation. The child wants to define the meaning of himself through his environment and what he gets is mush. A South Amazon staffer complains about how the kids always hound him to buy them wine or smoke

dope with them and he always tells them that he can't because it would jeopardize the program. What kind of an answer is that? He is telling them, in an unspoken parenthetical statement, that he really would if only he could. The kids keep after him because they know his value-confusion; they've learned it in their own homes from mothers who don't mind sex-play so much but certainly don't want their daughters to get pregnant, and from fathers who forbid drinking — except in the house. Wouldn't another staffer with less value-confusion have done better to refuse to buy wine simply because he didn't want to; because he thought it was wrong?

So we have missed the boat. Our drop-in centers were wrong from the start. This is not to say that we ought to give up or revert back to hard-headed authoritarianism. There is a problem. Many young people are alienated. We did the right thing by trying to reach out and do something. We'll continue to experiment, to define if we can the mid-point between valuelessness and authoritarianism and to instill in youth a desire to want to cope with the world and to meet its challenges head-on — to transform it into a place in which they can project themselves as part of an uncertain but good future.

Reprinted courtesy Parks & Recreation Magazine, publication of National Recreation and Park Association, Washington, D. C.

NEVER THE TWAIN...

Mr. T. Scott who had agreed to meet with young people to determine their understanding and their recreation priorities, reported that a meeting with 30 young people was held in the Knox United Church on July 15. The Recreation Centre was set up as a drop-in with a ping-pong table and other recreational equipment ... The teenagers stopped coming when youngsters of 11 and 12 were in the majority — another age gap — not a cross section of Kenora youth is interested.

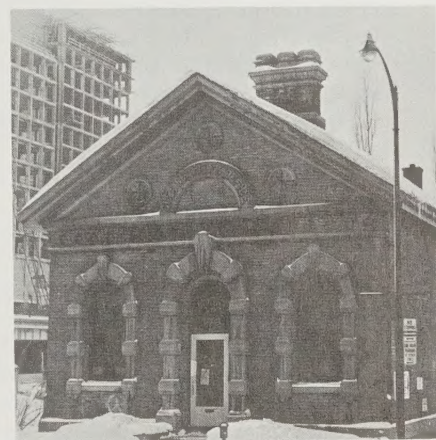
*Excerpt from minutes of a meeting of the Kenora and District Social Planning Council
September 16, 1970*

EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY

Craig Dittrich

Pressure from two groups of citizens with opposite views transformed the idea of a drop-in to an actuality.

Young people wanted a centre to meet some of their needs. At the same time, some of the merchants of Ottawa were seeking a facility for control purposes. This is no longer a hassle, but we have to keep reminding supporters that our purpose is not "to get kids off the streets".



Once the City Registry Office, now the home of the Street Community Centre. Because of a burst boiler, the building is without central heating. Meetings are held and work is done in front of an open fireplace.

The community organization responsible for the development of the Street Community Centre in Ottawa is the Mayor's Committee on Youth who advise and plan for this and other operations. The Ottawa YM-YWCA is the incorporated agency administering the funds received from National Health and Welfare and the United Appeal. Street Community Centre staff are employed by the YM-YWCA and the operation is a YM-YWCA detached program.

As a result of drop-in centre activity and other community development,
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situation in kingston

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user was in great difficulty because of an overdose. Staff then would help. Necking was forbidden and physical contact not permitted. Offenders must either stop or leave. A member of the professional staff must be in attendance at all times. The background of volunteer workers must be checked thoroughly. The building must be kept clean. Decent language must be maintained. Membership and billiard room fees were to be charged. The new hours to be Tuesday to Thursday after school to 5 p.m., and from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Fridays from after school to 5 p.m., and from 6 p.m. to midnight. Saturdays from 3 to 5 p.m. and from 6 to midnight. During school hours, teenagers were to be discouraged from using the Y facilities.

Rules not acceptable

Before the new and stricter rules were put into effect, about 75 young people used the drop-in during the week, and up to 200 on Friday and Saturday nights. Attendance dropped to no more than 20 on week-end nights. This bore out what had been expected. The young people would not obey strict regulations and dropped out.

The following letter is reprinted from the Kingston Whig Standard.

"Unrealistic Rules"

Sir: What is the purpose of a teenage drop-in centre? Is it to provide a place for adolescents to play cards and watch television under supervision? Is it to shelter youth from the ugly facts of life they encounter every day in the corridors and washrooms of their high schools?

Teen-agers will always find some place to be alone with their favourite date, to show affection, to show off and to experiment. Who will deny that Kingston has its sub-culture of drugs and alcohol? The goods are easily obtainable and will be used. The question is "where?"

It is better to discourage excesses

through guidance, tolerance, and understanding of a liberal but realistic youth centre, or to pretend they don't exist? A "stoned" youth will roam the streets only because he has no place else to go. Saturday night in the back seat of a car is the alternative facing a precocious couple. And most teen-agers experiment with drugs at a "friend's house" or at a "party".

Bearing these thoughts in mind, I would like to bring to your attention the totally unrealistic rules which have recently been placed on the Wright Street YMCA drop-in centre. These regulations turn the drunk youth back into the streets, make bodily contact a thing of shame, and discourages initiative. It costs you up to \$7.50 to "drop-in", in fees.

Johnny drinks. If he is found drunk

at the centre by angry parents, rather than in the gutter, in an accident, or in jail, it is because its supervisors tolerated his behaviour and tried to help him! Let's not use the "Y" as a scape-goat. I am a medical student and a volunteer at the YMCA. I've seen Murut and other drop-in centres collapse due to public harassment, as the same public shouted for more "community youth centres". I saw the YMCA achieving a useful role in Kingston. With these new rules, the drop-in centre's role will be to shield our eyes from reality.

Dennis Seguin

A new program began January 1, 1971 placing the emphasis on children from 8 to 12 years old.

There is once again "nothing doing in Kingston for the teenagers".



The YAC atmosphere is the first bearable one many of these young people have ever found. This photo was taken Christmas Eve when the young people gathered in the living room for rapping and music. Pictures around the Easy Rider poster are the work of the youngsters, some of whom are talented in music and art.

(Story on page 5)

how it is in oshawa

cont'd from page 5

around outside a church. An all day rap session was arranged between the young people and the police.

Both groups felt the day was an eye opener, that an understanding had been established and that each had a better knowledge of the others' views.

More problems

Despite the co-operation of citizens, police, churches, organizations and City Council, there are still many problems and frustrations.

At first it was believed the initiative for programs must come from youth. The creative-minded organized concerts, but aside from this, there were no art or craft programs. The drug problem became more acute. Speed users established the atmosphere. Distrust, fear and hostility pervaded. Finally, a group of some 20 speed users disrupted the centre. It was closed for three weeks while concerned groups examined the situation and developed new terms of reference.

When it re-opened February 6, new personnel with new, planned programs were on hand to guide the young people in satisfying their social and emotional needs constructively.

Adults directly involved feel that the major purpose of the centre should be one of service to youth. It should be explicitly stated and understood that the primary purpose of the resource is to serve the unique and identifiable needs of the young person between 14 and 21 who came to the centre.

Other drop-ins

There are two other drop-in centres in Oshawa. Cedar Street Drop-in Centre is in south Oshawa in a building on United Church property. It is used mostly by younger boys and girls.

The East End 69 Drop-in is somewhat isolated in the east end. It

operates two nights a week in a separate school under an arrangement with Ontario County Separate School Board. The leader was chosen by the young people and is paid by the Recreation Department.

But downtown is where the action is at. Many of the teenagers there are from problem families. Despite the problems and the constant activity, one neighbor commented that "there is less noise now that the young people are using the Hall than when the Legion did."

notes on a youth centre

cont'd from page 8

Paradox II

To motivate a problem-oriented kid requires first a concern and care, recognition and acceptance of him as a person, followed by some rapping about his situation. If he realizes that your suggestions can help him, you can take advantage of this by asking him to help you with the centre. That involves him in something other than himself. You offer him positive friendship for help in the centre. He becomes accountable to you, the first step in teaching him to be responsible to himself.

It is impossible to run a youth centre without thus developing a select group of youth to help. In acknowledging that they are select, you give them status and recognition.

Without intending to, the worker builds a base of groups of youngsters who respond to his personality, particular interests and ways of dealing with problems. The danger is that the worker may become bogged down in the select group, and stop relating to other youngsters.

Staff turn-over

In some centres the staff turn-over is fairly rapid. Youth-work in a centre, except for the summer months, is usually a part-time paying position. Unfortunately this

puts financial hardship on the workers forcing them to look elsewhere for full-time employment. Really good workers soon find it and move on.

Not for everybody

Youth centres may not be beneficial to all youth. Those who have deep on-going problems often are attracted to other youth in the centre who have similar problems. They give one another support but have not the overview to offer one another realistic alternatives. It is important to recognize the need as soon as possible and provide sensitive but firm intervention. The worker needs the support of a sophisticated referral service. Otherwise the centre may actually be detrimental to troubled young people.

Last resort

A youth centre is valid because it offers a choice. The youngster may relax and do nothing, or enter into creative partnership with others in planning, developing or evaluating educational and recreational programs.

Centres also offer youth a chance to talk out problems with an understanding but resourceful "friend" — the youth worker. In some cases the centre is a last resort for a youngster, and his commitment is not light. It is a commitment to self-help with the support and resources of the youth worker.

Commitment

A youth centre is not a building. It is a commitment. It becomes a political commitment by admitting that not all of our established institutions can meet the needs of a growing number of youth. But more importantly, it is an opportunity for youth to develop commitments to each other using a self-determined youth centre structure as means. With the proper support and planning this tool will create an environment which will foster activity and involvement, encourage expression and allow for personal growth—which it is really all about!

two-level drop-in centres work in bowmanville

cont'd from page 4

Funds were provided by the Department of Recreation of the Town of Bowmanville. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce made a donation and the young people raised money with bottle drives and car washes.

Mill House was open seven days a week from 1 p.m. to midnight. On the main floor, games were set up — chess, checkers and table tennis. The basement was turned into a music room with tables, chairs, a supply of coffee and pop and of course, folk music. There was a dance every Friday night.

The young people put out a monthly publication, *The Orange Free Press* named after Orange Park, a former favorite hang out. The paper was distributed to local stores and schools and sold for 10¢ a copy. Both junior and senior centres closed for the year in August. However, it is expected Mill House will be re-opened by the end of January as soon as heating is installed.

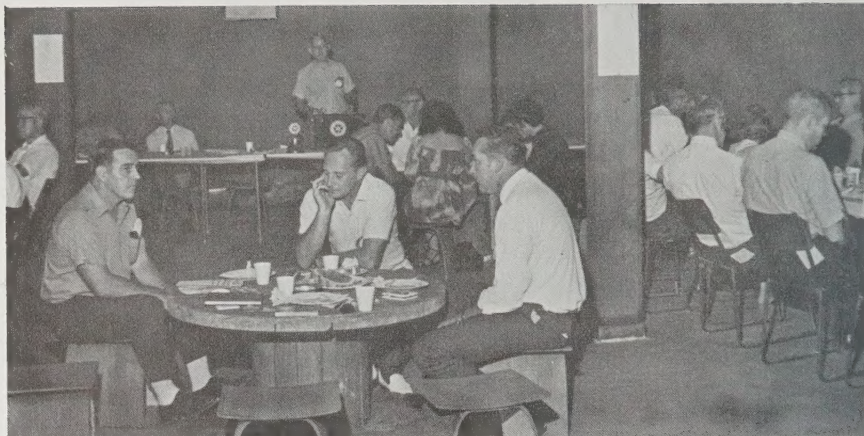
When the centres first opened, some citizens took a negative view and were not in favor of the idea. By summer's end, however, a

emphasis on community

cont'd from page 9

Ottawa has had summer hostels for the last three summers. Through the drop-in centre, the Mayor's Committee on Youth has set these up in school gymnasiums, and paid rent to the Board of Education. Financial aid for the summer hostel in 1970 came from Ottawa-Carleton Regional Welfare, Youth and Recreation Branch of the Ontario Department of Education and the Task Force funded by the Secretary of State's office. A local service club offered to cover a deficit, should one occur.

Our staff is presently working with the Mayor's Committee on Youth towards developing a year-round



The Rotary Club of Bowmanville is a strong supporter of the drop-in centre. As a combined thank-you-for-your-help and a fund raising project, the Mill House youth committee gave a luncheon for the Rotary Club in the Mill House.

change of attitude had developed. About 80% were in favor and felt the young people had done a good job.

Supervisor Bill Wright and the committee successfully solved minor problems that arose. Local police were pleased with the operation.

According to T.A. Fanning, director of recreation, Mayor Ivan Hobbs was a frequent "drop-in" at the centres. He and council are for the young people. They feel results have been good and that the centres have proved themselves to be valuable and to fill a need.

hostel residence. Such a residence would serve as a central coordinating body and provide seasonal annexes to accommodate large numbers of people during the four summer months. The hostel-residence itself will accommodate 50-60 young people from the local area. Also a treatment residence is being developed to accommodate 12 people.

In June 1970, the Mayor's Committee on Youth opened a street clinic using four staff paid by Addiction Research Foundation's summer employment program and four unpaid staff. This operation was an experiment for four months. At the end of that time it was evaluated by Addiction Research Foundation and it won their recommendation that it continue. The coordinator of the street clinic, Patty Deline, was a drop-in centre

employee who has since become the director of the clinic. It is now an ongoing operation with its own budget as a YM-YWCA detached program.

The centre is being used for meetings, theatre, film showings, furniture refinishing, distribution for a food co-op, silk screening, candle making, and so on. Its rooms are also used by two outside groups, a University of Ottawa criminology class and the Ottawa women's liberation.

The original Ottawa drop-in centre on Nicholas Street was closed for renovation and evaluation in September, 1970. Its successor, the Street Community Centre opened at the same site in October. The approach that has been developed since the first drop-in operation in 1968, has been adapted and used by other local agencies.

Information, counselling and program activities are still offered during the afternoons and evenings. However, the staff of five do most of their work outside the building and the emphasis is changing. We are now trying to help the people who come to us to find alternative values to those they are rejecting. Our objective has now become the creation and development of a youth community.

Photo Credits

Page 6, 10 Dr. J.B. Wynne
Page 1, 2 Philip Coombe